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THE

OBJECTS AND AIMS OF
MEDICAL SCIENCE,

AND THE

RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN THE MEDICAL
PROFESSION AND THE PUBLIC.

*THE ANNIVERSARY ORATION BEFORE THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK.*

BY

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OF THE CITY AND COUNTY OF NEW YORK, AND
HONORARY MEMBER OF THE DUTCHESS
COUNTY SOCIETY, ETC.

[REPRINTED FROM THE N. Y. MEDICAL JOURNAL, MAY, 1871.]

NEW YORK:
D. APPLETON & COMPANY,
549 & 551 BROADWAY.
1871.

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THE PUBLIC.*¹

FELLOW-ALUMNI OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK: Selected, through your partiality, to represent you at this, the fifth anniversary of our Association, I am here this evening to extend to you the hand of fraternal greeting; abandoning for the moment the engrossing cares, the severe labors of our calling, and once again assembled about the hearth-stone of *Alma Mater*, to indulge, with you, in a brief respite of friendly intercourse, and to revive the pleasant reminiscences of our medical childhood; also to greet you, ladies and gentlemen, and to thank you for the interest manifested in our behalf. It is well for both of us, the profession and the laity, our patients, to meet together on occasions like the present, and to become better acquainted as

¹ This article contains the "Oration" unabridged. A considerable portion was omitted by the author at the meeting of the Association.

a body, since our respective interests are so intimately blended. And, since this acquaintance is, as yet, by no means so close as its mutual advantages require that it should be, we cannot, perhaps, more profitably employ a part of the time allotted us this evening than by endeavoring to remove certain misconceptions, which generally obtain among the public, regarding the objects and aims of scientific medicine, and its claims on public estimation and confidence; to consider the duties and obligations of scientific physicians, and the manner in which we have fulfilled and are endeavoring to fulfil these duties, and to cancel these obligations; and thus, as we hope, to vindicate our claim to a greater respect and confidence, even of gratitude from you, ladies and gentlemen, and those whom you represent. This will necessarily include a glance at the past, and a brief sketch of the present state of medical science.

At the outset, it is important that the public should know who constitute the medical profession. In most *foreign* countries, it is possible even for the public to separate the physician from the charlatan, the educated man of science from the ignorant pretender, inasmuch as the law lends its powerful aid to draw the line of demarcation, to protect both the physician and the public from the danger of imposition and deception. Deprived of this aid here, the public must take their chance; for, in this land of freedom and equality, the most ignorant boor has practically the same right to hang out, in the most frequented thoroughfares, the badge of our profession, as the man who has spent his patrimony, and the best years of his life, in acquiring a certain degree of mastery over its intricate problems, and a practical training to enable him to cope, with some hope of success, with its startling emergencies. In this great State of New York, the Empire State, and in this enlightened age, as we are in the habit of terming it, this is the disgraceful fact. We therefore find, on many occasions, the most ardent quacks, with bold and insinuating address, and frequently fortified by the certificates and recommendations of their clerical friends, received into the wealthiest and most intelligent families, recognized as doctor or surgeon, and carrying off far

larger rewards than an honest physician would have demanded. We find hydropaths, electropaths, rubbers, and bone-setters, quack oculists and aurists, with their rooms often crowded with the *élite* of society, and all hailed as "doctors," because the law allows them to assume that formerly honorable title. We read, in the prominent papers, how the verdant Mr. S——, from the country, visited the celebrated Doctor ——, and how he was tricked out of a splendid fee; or how, through the revelations of a coroner's investigation, Dr. E—— was arrested on a charge of committing the most infamous crimes under the cloak of the assumed title of M. D. You have not forgotten, and will not soon forget, it is hoped, the recent disgraceful tragedy in Chatham Street, nor the fact that the signs of no less criminal characters, well known to the agents of the law, are now conspicuous in many localities "down-town," and their advertisements staining the pages of the papers which you and your wives and daughters are reading every day. We find the columns of our principal papers occupied, not unfrequently, with an elaborate though most absurd explanation of a prevailing epidemic, by some charlatan seeking to attain a lucrative notoriety, styling himself "doctor," and received and quoted as such in opposition to the matured opinions of scientific men. The odium of the mistakes, the crimes, the absurdities, and failures of this class is, to a certain extent, visited on the heads of the regular profession, and lowers its standing in the public estimation. It is somewhat singular that the Western or younger States have taken the initiative in the enactment of stringent laws for the suppression, as far as possible, of those frauds and crimes; while our own State has actually been engaged in repealing, from time to time, the few restrictive laws which had, by great effort, been wrung from former Legislatures.

As we look back along the vista of medical history, even for two thousand years and upward, even to the days of Hippocrates, the father of medicine, or farther back, to the date of the Trojan War, when the sons of *Æsculapius*, the god of Medicine, flourished, when the immortal Homer, handing down his testimony, writes—

Patroclus cut the forky steel away,
 When, in his hand, a bitter root he bruised.
 The wound he washed, the styptic juice infused,
 The closing flesh, that instant ceased to glow,
 The wound to torture, and the blood to flow.

—and observe, among the successive epochs and generations, the great names, and great deeds of our illustrious predecessors, names not stamped on historic page with the impress of blood, deeds not memorable for hecatombs of human sacrifice, all starting forward to demand recognition from a grateful posterity, we shrink from the responsibility of individual mention. As regards the early fathers of our science, it will suffice merely to allude to the estimation in which they were held by their rulers and fellow-citizens, to prove the eminent services which they rendered. The ancients deified their celebrated medical men, and dedicated temples to their honor. The Athenians indicate the high estimation in which *they* held medical science, by one of their laws, which prohibited any slave or woman from prosecuting its study. Some nations stamped their effigies on the coins. The Greek physicians, coming to Rome, were complimented with the freedom of the “Eternal City,” a privilege of which that proud people were extremely jealous. Their great orator, Cicero, says, that “Nothing brings men nearer the gods than by giving health to their fellow-creatures.” “When the elder Cato,” says the historian Renouard, “pursued, with his ordinary obstinacy, the philosophers, rhetoricians, and physicians of Greece, whom he accused of corrupting the manners of the Romans, and finally succeeded in obtaining a decree for their expulsion, notwithstanding all his efforts, the physicians were excepted in the decree.” “Socrates, in his last discourse with his friends, requested them to offer a cock, as a sacrifice for him, to *Æsculapius*.” To come down to a later period, I would point to Vesalius, the first dissector of the human body, as he is depicted by the great painter—in his lonely apartment, the cadaver on the table, the knife in his hand, his eye on the crucifix, the anathemas of that terrible engine of cruelty, the Spanish Inquisition, vainly thundering in his ears. “The sublime spectacle of Vesalius, in his first dissection,” says Dr. Gray, in his

address before our State Medical Society, "illustrates the holy ardor, the nobility, the heroic courage of the profession, in his age, and in all ages. In the path of investigation were toil, and dishonor, and death, but it was the road of life for all the race of men. On his vision shone the glorious light of coming triumph in medicine—the disenthralment of that science which should save the race. He died a martyr to his zeal, but his work survived." How different the conduct of Galileo, the philosopher, publicly denying, under similar circumstances, the truth of his grand discovery! Witness Pinel, after years of persistent toil, and persuasion, and countless refusals, finally allowed to go on his great mission of philanthropy, to the Bicêtre in Paris, that menagerie of human wild beasts, more savage, from the effects of harsh and misdirected treatment, than the beasts of the forest, the fettered victims of public ignorance. See him enter alone and unprotected, his countenance beaming with love and sympathy, fear forgotten in his divine errand; see him strike off the shackles, and lift up the poor, maimed, and forsaken wretches; see the fires of madness and revenge die away in their eyes, as they gaze into his. Here is a scene for the painter, a theme for the poet, a lesson for the Christian. Consider the incalculable benefits to our race, which have arisen from the simple discovery of Jenner, who, for over thirty years, sacrificing comfort and practice, braving ridicule and detraction, threatened with expulsion from the clubs, yet never swerving from his determination to work out the problem, which was to furnish the greatest earthly boon ever vouchsafed to man. "The persecutors of Galileo," says Dr. Baron, "would, I believe, have been eclipsed in their monstrous and outrageous hostility to the splendid discoveries of that illustrious man, by some of the opponents of vaccination, had the spirit of the age, or their own power, enabled them to carry their designs into execution." Now that small-pox has thus, for so many years, been shorn of its terrors, we are apt to forget that scarce half a century has elapsed since this disease constituted the most dreadful scourge of our race. In the Russian Empire it is said to have swept off nearly two millions in a single year. Dr. Lettsene calculated that two hundred and ten thousand fell victims to it annually in Europe.

Of those that recovered, many were blind or partially so, many so disfigured as hardly to be recognizable, many left, with fatal disease developed by its ravages in the system, to linger out a painful existence. At this day we have examples to show that its virulence and ravages are just the same as they formerly were, whenever it attacks a community unprotected by vaccination. This very day I read in the *Herald* that "the small-pox is committing fearful ravages in the Red River country. Two thousand Indians and half-breeds have died recently in the Saskatchewan district." If, from the medical profession, no other benefit to the race had proceeded but this, it would have been entitled to the gratitude of mankind for all time to come.

In fine, the history of medicine and of medical men is, from the earliest ages, the story of struggles for the melioration of the human race, often in the face of the prejudices and discouragements, even the persecution of that race. Every great stride in advance of the civilization and the ideas of the age has been regarded with suspicion, often thrust back again and again, but never arrested. Every bold assertion of a new and startling truth, worked out by years of toil, and danger, and death, has been looked upon as a heresy, only to be recognized after the general intellect had marched up, year by year, as in the case of vaccination, to its advanced stand-point.

In looking back, with an appreciative eye, on the labors and the triumphs of our predecessors, we do not *rest* on their achievements, but we make these a point of departure for ours. We receive the rich heritage, but we do not sit down to enjoy it in self-complacent ease: we glory in the prospective as well as the retrospective. Our motto is "Onward, upward." History, official statistics, French and English especially, our periodical literature, establish the fact of a solid and rapid advance in the science and art of medicine—such an advance as lengthens the average span of human life, as mitigates human suffering, and promotes human comfort, and enhances generally the pleasure of human existence. He who charges medical science with being a laggard in the march of intellect, of scientific progress, of practical improvement, affords indubitable evidence that he himself has failed to appreciate what

has been transpiring around him in the scientific world, and is ignorant of its current history. Let us, in illustration of this assertion, pass, in rapid review, some of the more prominent of these improvements and inventions. First, the practical and now almost universal application of the *microscope* to the diagnosis of disease, and especially to the detection of those causes of epidemics and epizootics which had formerly necessarily eluded our keenest investigators, the discovery of which has been of such vast importance to our race, in preventing or limiting the spread of fatal diseases both among men and animals, and which we may notice more particularly under the head of *hygiene*.

"The great advances of science," says Dr. Maudsley, "have uniformly corresponded with the invention (or utilization) of some instrument, by which the power of the senses has been increased, or their range of action extended."

Let us dwell, for a moment, on a still nobler use of the microscope. In the hands of Dr. Beale, a distinguished English physician, it has done what all the philosophers, and all the theologians, and all scientific talent combined, had previously failed to accomplish. It has demolished the materialistic and atheistic doctrine of "spontaneous generation;" just as the discovery of an apparently insignificant fossil, the "*Asterolepis* of *Stromness*," in a little far-off seaport of the Orkneys, by the lamented Hugh Miller, gave the death-blow to the no less atheistic "*development theory*," so interestingly set forth in the "*Vestiges of Creation*," a book which most of you have probably already nearly forgotten. It is impossible to give you any very definite idea of how Dr. Beale upset the spontaneous-generation theory with his microscope, and his book showing "how to work" it, without going into a history of the development of this theory and its supposed facts, from the great Schwann, with whom it may be said to have originated, through Robin, and the French school, to Darwin and Darwinism. Suffice it to say, that Darwin erected his atheistic temple on what he terms the "primordial form." But Beale proves, by his microscope, and its skilful use, that there is no such form, and that therefore this temple is founded on sand or something even less substantial. He proves that

there can be no development from a primordial form or vegetable cell into an animal, because the microscope shows that all vegetable cells have double walls, while animal cells have single walls; while it gives this further confirmation—that, if you give *organie* nourishment to a double-walled or a *vegetable* cell, it dies, whereas *inorganic* food causes it to spring up and grow. The reverse happens with the single-walled, or *animal* cell. All this is a matter of sight, not of speculation; what not only Dr. Beale, but any other microscopist may see. Thus we perceive how wonderfully, how mysteriously God manifests His truths unto us; how intimately blended are the interests of science and religion, and how absurd the efforts of those who, from a want of appreciation of scientific investigations and truths, have sought to array them in antagonism.

“Who would suppose,” says Dr. Acland, in his inaugural address before the British Medical Association, “that the question of spontaneous generation, so keenly debated from a very early period, to our own year and day, need have any bearing on practice? Yet see how the observations of Pasteur are connected with the questions of infection, nay, more, of suppuration, and (as shown to be probable by Prof. Lister) of surgical treatment. It would, indeed, be a great point if we could prove that no germs, carriers of disease, spontaneously originate, but must always come from a progenitor-cell. If so, there would be just a hope that some diseases might be effectually stamped out.” It is not too much to expect, I think, that the microscope will, ere long, prove this. The *dynamograph*, or power-measurer, reveals to us what we had formerly very roughly to estimate—muscular power, nervous energy. *Photography*, in connection with the *stereoscope*, has been called into requisition to represent the exact appearance, either of healthy or diseased specimens, and we are thus rendered independent of the skill of an artist. The *endoscope* enables us to look, by reflected light, into the cavities of the body, and removes some obscure pathological conditions from the field of conjecture to that of certainty. By the aid of the *laryngoscope*, we look into the *larynx*, into the *trachea*, or windpipe, and even down the *bronchi*, almost into the lungs, and actually see the diseases instead of inferring them from the symptoms. Not

only this, but, guided by the light of its reflector, we pass the knife, through the mouth, deeply into the *larynx*, and remove morbid growths, thus obviating the disagreeable and dangerous procedure of external incision, nothing being cut but the disease itself. We may also take a specimen from the disease, with little or no inconvenience to the patient, place it under the microscope, and decide, in some cases, between cancer and non-malignant disease, and thus upon the chance for cure.

By that remarkable instrument, the *sphygmograph*, which is so attached to the forearm that the pulse-beats, striking a spring, are transmitted to an index, holding a pen, the heart is made to register its own action on a sheet of paper, the character of its chirography indicating health or disease, and their different grades; and thus also, to a certain extent, indicating the condition of the nervous system, under whose influence it pulsates. By the use of the reflected light of the *perforated mirror*, the diagnosis and treatment of the diseases of the *ear* have been greatly improved in accuracy, while the *ophthalmoscope* has revolutionized the diagnosis of diseases of the eye, by enabling the oculist to see the condition of its posterior tunics, its *media*, lens, etc., as plainly as we see the *cornea* or the lids; not only this, but, through the eye, as a window, to look at the condition of the cerebral vessels and circulation, to say whether there is *hyperæmia* or *anæmia*, too much or too little blood, and thus to diagnose constitutional as well as local affections. Its revelations have even been applied to business transactions. In a recent case, in England, Mr. Hart, now resident with us, prevented an insurance company from advancing a heavy sum on the life of a gentleman already insured, but in whose case an ophthalmoscopic examination was necessary, owing to some anomaly of vision. The examination led to the conclusion that the arteries of the brain were atheromatous, or diseased, which subsequent events confirmed; just as the microscope, in the hands of a physician of Poughkeepsie, a year or so ago, led to the detection of an ingenious forgery which all other means were powerless to prove.

The *thermometer*, a very old instrument, and, more than a hundred years ago, applied to the elucidation of physiological and pathological problems, has lately been utilized,

and now forms one of the most important of our modern aids to *diagnosis*. In many doubtful cases, it now substitutes certainty for conjecture, and enables us to predict phenomena long before they are apparent to the unaided senses, and, in many instances, to ward off most fatal complications. An example, taken from a book published many years ago, by Dr. John Davy,¹ will illustrate its usefulness in medicine. "On the 4th of August, the temperature under the tongue (of a lunatic) was found to be 104.5° (the normal temperature is, as you know, 98°) and his pulse rapid. This called attention to his state; and, although he made no complaint—his appetite good—the functions, as far as known, tolerably well performed—it was inferred he had obscure disease of the lungs. He died in less than month. The fatal disease was pulmonary consumption, organically considered, in an aggravated form, but, in relation to symptoms, most mild. There were ulcers of larynx without affection of voice; most extensive disease of lungs, vomice and tubercles, without cough; ulceration of intestines without diarrhoea, and other disease equally latent, and without pain." *The electric bullet-probe* may be mentioned as one of the ingenious and useful inventions of the day. It is connected, at one end, with an electric chime, and, when the other end comes in contact with metal, as a bullet, the chime announces the fact. At the first trial with it in Berlin, "Staff-Surgeon Kemperdick succeeded in finding a ball lodged in the bones of the foot, which had been vainly sought for during six weeks." This is even more ingenious than the instrument contrived by the celebrated French surgeon, Nélaton, and with which, as you may remember, he discovered in Garibaldi's foot the ball which had eluded the search of the Italian surgeons and of an English surgeon who travelled all the way from England to see him, and with which I myself, with two army surgeons at West Point, succeeded in finding a ball lodged in the thigh-bone of an officer, which had lain there for over a year, and which was fast hurrying his case toward a fatal termination, the verification of the metal leading to treatment which eventually restored a meritorious officer to

¹ "Researches, Anatomical and Physiological." London edition, vol. i., p. 206.

perfect health. I think we may fairly rest our case here, as far as mechanical contrivances, in aid of diagnosis, are concerned, though the list is not exhausted. Most of these are of such recent introduction as scarcely yet to have come into general use, even in large cities and hospitals. But I should not fail to *allude* at least to the great advance made, in this country especially, in the mechanical improvements of surgery; particularly in the management of fractures, and in the correction and cure of deformities of the spine and limbs, *directly*, by supports, and, *indirectly*, by the new method of assisting weak muscles to develop, and thus to effect a physiological cure. So simple a matter as the use of adhesive plaster and of "plaster of Paris" in surgery has effected almost a revolution in some of its departments; while, by their use, the comfort of the patient, during treatment, has been greatly enhanced. What wonders have been effected in surgery, and especially in that of women, by the simple fact of the introduction of the *metallic suture*, by our distinguished countryman Sims, whose fame is world-wide, who taught the great surgeons of the European capitals a lesson, which, with all their science and skill, they had not been able to learn before! But time will not permit us to dwell longer on the fruitful topic of surgery. Those of you who had the good fortune to hear the recent lecture of my friend Prof. Hamilton, before the American Institute, can form some idea of what science has been doing in that great department. Our means for *resuscitating drowned and otherwise asphyxiated persons* have been greatly improved and simplified; and the miracle of restoring the dead to life is now a common occurrence. The efforts of certain physicians, toward the *improvement of the condition of idiots* and idiot asylums, have been attended, during the past few years, by most signal success, and these unfortunates are now, as a very general rule, elevated from the level of the grovelling brute to that of a more or less useful citizen. If the *inebriate asylums*, which this country has the honor of inaugurating, have been less successful, they still give promise of future results, and a more necessary and praiseworthy effort for the benefit of individual happiness, the safety of society, and the welfare of the State, could not enlist our sympathy and earnest support. Medical

progress in *the management of the insane* has not been behind that of any other department. Personal restraint has, I believe, been universally abolished in regular asylums, and this fact stands, of itself, an index of the progress which has been made. But, if the profession have done *their* duty in this matter, the public have not. The condition of a large number, especially of the chronic insane, scattered among the poor-houses, in almost all of our counties, is deplorable, and a disgrace to the civilization of the age, which should be abated without delay; and we, as medical men, should not relax our efforts until we compel our legislators, by placing constantly before their eyes such facts as most successfully appeal to the coldest sympathy, to afford an asylum to all these unfortunates. The report of the Hudson River State Asylum for the Insane, from the pen of my able friend Dr. Cleaveland, sets forth, with startling detail, "the shocking state of the insane in our poor-houses, and exhibits the shameful and persistent neglect with which the earnest appeals from disinterested philanthropists, from physicians, from State governors, conventions of county 'Superintendents of the Poor,' and even from their own committees, have been treated by successive Legislatures, from the time when Miss Dix, twenty-seven years ago, made her eloquent and indignant, though unavailing appeal." Great advances are being made in the study of *climatology* of late, which bid fair to make that branch of medical science of some value. The term "medical geography" has been recently applied to the study of the distribution of diseases over the surface of the earth, and an atlas is supplied, showing geographical zones, and thus marking, with precision, the localities and boundaries of the principal endemic diseases of the earth. This is of more importance, in a country of such vast extent as ours, than in any other.

A prominent characteristic of all our improvements, both in medicine and surgery, has been the power thereby afforded us not only of saving life and limb, but of doing so by more expeditious, more safe, and more comfortable methods; *tuto, cito, et jucunde*. In no particular does our modern treatment contrast more strongly with that of our old masters, than in this particular; and to the introduction of the *hypoder-*

mic syringe, by Alexander Wood, of Edinburgh, do we owe a large part of our ability to cope, with complete and prompt success, with pain, the most important element of disease. To allay pain is often the first step toward the cure of disease, and sometimes even more important than to save life. How many, when suffering from the pangs of cancer, of neuralgia, and similar diseases, have wished for death a hundred times! How many poor wounded soldiers, on the battle-field, have prayed for a friendly bullet to end their sufferings! There should be a fund raised to build a monument to Wood, and every one who has felt the relief of his instrument should subscribe to it. Lastly, it is scarcely necessary, before an audience like this, to mention the crowning glory of medical advance in the last half-century—*anæsthesia*. Who is not familiar with its brilliant history? Who is there that has not experienced its benefit, or witnessed its heavenly influence over some suffering friend? How wide-spread, how complete its success! And to America belongs the sole glory of its utilization, if not of its discovery, notwithstanding the persistent efforts in Great Britain to wrest it from us.

With all our improvements and advances, however, we are painfully conscious that the *relations existing between the medical profession and society, especially the educated classes*, are far from satisfactory or complimentary to us. Why is this so? There are many reasons, some external to, and some, unfortunately, within the profession itself. To a *misconception of our aims and duties, and, as a corollary, to a want of appreciation of what we have done, and are doing for the benefit of society*, may be ascribed a large share of the comparatively low estimate at which we are held. To remove this misconception, then, and to impart the necessary information, is a matter of prime importance. It is marvellous how little the public know of us or of our science, how little, in fact, non-medical men know of themselves; and yet they imagine they know a good deal, and, what is worse, they act on that presumption. Listen to what the celebrated Prof. Huxley says in a recent lecture before the *élite* of London: "I am addressing, I imagine, an audience of educated persons, and yet I dare

venture to assert that, with the exception of those of my hearers who may chance to have received a medical education, there is not one who could tell me what is the meaning and use of an act which he performs a score of times every minute, and whose suspension would involve his immediate death—I mean the act of breathing—or who could state, in precise terms, why it is that a confined atmosphere is injurious to health. The practical value of physiological knowledge! Why is it that educated men can be found to maintain that a slaughter-house, in the midst of a great city, is rather a good thing than otherwise?—that mothers persist in exposing the largest possible amount of surface of their children to the cold, by the absurd style of dress they adopt, and then marvel at the peculiar dispensation of Providence, which removes their infants by bronchitis and gastric fever? Why is it that quackery rides rampant over the land; and that, not long ago, one of the largest public rooms in this great city could be filled by an audience gravely listening to the reverend expositor of the doctrine—that the simple, physiological phenomena known as spirit-rapping, table-turning, phrenomagnetism, and by I know not what other absurd and inappropriate names, are due to the direct and personal agency of Satan? Why is all this, except from the utter ignorance as to the simplest laws of their own animal life, which prevails even among the most highly-educated persons in this country?"¹ And yet Huxley's countrymen are ahead of us in the endeavor to diffuse proper medical knowledge. On the tables of most of the clubs in London may be seen the *London Lancet* and *Medical Gazette*, by the side of the *London Times*, *Chronicle*, etc. Let me therefore hope that you will bear, with patience, the infliction while I attempt to profit by this occasion, which we physicians seldom enjoy, of meeting you collectively, face to face, and strive to effect a better understanding between us. To you as individuals, and collectively, as constituting society, and the *personnel* of State, and of Government, our relations are so numerous and so intimate, that to do any reasonable degree of justice to their consideration must necessarily compel me to draw somewhat largely on your time and patience.

¹ "Lay Sermons and Addresses," etc., p. 89.

A too common mistake is to suppose that the ability of the surgeon is measured by his dexterity in operating, and that of the physician by his knowledge of drugs, and his skill in administering them. This is a very narrow-minded and prejudicial view of the science and art of medicine. Though skill and celerity in operating are desiderata always to be acquired if possible, they by no means guarantee the best surgeon. Accuracy in diagnosis, judgment as to the propriety of operation, and the proper time for it; the preparation of the patient, and the management of the case afterward, of the complications always liable to occur, the proper support of the strength, and a hundred *minutiae*, will engage the care and attention of the skilful surgeon, and generally form a vastly more difficult part of his duty than the mere mechanical procedure, though this may involve the necessity for a large share of anatomical knowledge. If a surgeon save a limb which others have considered hopelessly injured, we accord him praise far higher than we ever do for the most dexterous amputation. Throughout our late calamitous war, the greatest triumphs of surgery consisted in the saving of limbs which, under similar circumstances, had been previously condemned by the eminent authorities to amputation. Exsections, or the cutting out of the fragments of injured bone, were practised largely instead of amputation, and often no operation at all, but only careful management, aided by a judicious mechanical contrivance. So that the greatest boast of our surgeons was, not the number of amputations performed, but the number avoided—the number of desperate cases which they had conducted unamputated to a favorable termination, often under the most untoward circumstances, and with very inadequate means. The records of the Surgeon-General's Department at Washington attest this. Nor is the physician's sole duty, nor the principal part of it, the search for efficient drugs, and the pouring them into the patient's stomach. If he have a proper appreciation of his office, he will be more ready to give advice than medicine, to leave the latter for those who have neither the wisdom nor the moral courage to profit by the former. The search for and the removal of surrounding conditions tending to foster the disease, especially if of a

chronic character, the regulation of the habits of the patient, his business, his diet, his sleep, his exercise, the ventilation and temperature of his apartments, his mental condition, and many other matters pertaining to his every-day life, must be duly considered; and, if he cannot, or will not, as is the case with too many, heed the advice which might supersede the call for drugs, then we must choose between two evils, disease and medicine; for the circumstances in which our patient may be placed, or his own choice, makes medicine a necessary evil; and it depends on the education, the care, and the judgment of the physician, whether it is a less or greater evil. The case is much the same with the lawyers. An honest lawyer will often advise his client against recourse to the law; to compromise, and thus to avoid the annoyances and expense of a doubtful suit. But, so long as society is as at present constituted, men obstinate and revengeful, litigation, like medicine, will continue to be a necessary evil. Pope says, "All partial evil is universal good." You have all heard of Mr. Abernethy, one of the most remarkable men of his day. His eccentricities and pithy sayings have become matters of general history. In truthfulness, bluntness, and independence, no one ever excelled him, no one either in genuine kindness and charity. Well, if you will indulge me for a few moments, I will recount one or two anecdotes connected with him, which perhaps some of you have heard, but which will serve to impress what I have just been saying on your minds. "Mrs. I—— consulted him concerning a nervous disorder, the minutiae of which appeared to be so fantastical, that he interrupted their frivolous detail by holding out his hand for the fee. A one-pound note and a shilling (the customary sum) were placed in it, upon which he returned the latter to his fair patient, with the angry exclamation: 'There, ma'am! go and buy a skipping-rope, that is all you want.' 'Pray, Mr. Abernethy, what is the cure for gout?' was the question of an indolent and luxurious citizen. 'Live upon sixpence a day, and *earn* it,' was the reply." The late Duke of York was reported once to have consulted Abernethy. During the time his Highness was in the room, Abernethy stood before him with his hands in his breeches-pockets, whistling with great coolness. The duke,

naturally astonished at his conduct, said, 'I suppose you know who I am? 'Suppose I do, what of that? If your Highness of York wishes to be well, let me tell you,' said the surgeon, 'you must do as the illustrious Duke of Wellington often did in his campaigns, *cut off the supplies*, and the enemy will quickly leave the citadel.' "

This topic naturally leads us to the discussion of *hygiene*, or the science of the *causes and prevention of disease*, as applied to the individual, and, in its wider and more important application, to the public and the State. Some of our greatest triumphs in modern times have been in this department. The most marked exemplification of this may be seen in the records of the Army and Navy, especially the latter, where, in consequence of the thorough manner in which the suggestions of the surgeon are enforced, through the isolation and perfect discipline of the crew, disease, in an epidemic form, is almost unknown; or, when it occurs, is "nipped in the bud." For instance, by the simple and certain process, in the case of yellow fever, of filling the vessel with steam from her boilers. Witness also the extraordinary healthfulness of our armies in the late war, operating in a climate to which they were entirely unaccustomed, and under circumstances most likely to induce disease. If we have not made any boastful progress in the pathology and treatment of that most terrible of modern plagues, *Asiatic cholera*, we have done what is of more importance towards the saving of life; we have discovered the conditions under which it is developed, its mode of propagation and spread, and we have thus been able, whenever our suggestions have been faithfully carried out, to limit its ravages. This achievement assumes proportions of no small magnitude, when we call to mind the many hundreds of thousands of victims annually sacrificed during its successive marches over a large extent of our globe, and the panic and prostration of business which it has caused in this city. Indeed, it is here, through the efforts of the physicians attached to the "Metropolitan Board of Health," that the greatest success has been achieved, at least two epidemics having been "stamped out," with an incalculable saving of life and trade. As recently as last summer, eighty-three cases of yellow fever occurred on

Governor's Island, right in our midst, and one hundred and two vessels arrived at quarantine with the disease on board, and yet no single instance, I believe, of the fever occurred in the metropolitan district, and that in a season most propitious apparently for its spread. Listen to what one of our prominent daily journals had to say about another epidemic, quite new to us—relapsing fever: "The result of the vigorous and decisive action of the Board of Health, and the coöperation of the Commissioners of Charities, have proved most gratifying. While the Sanitary Authorities of London have signally failed to control this epidemic, and it is now taxing that city to its utmost to provide for the sick, in New York the relapsing fever has shown no perceptible increase for several weeks. During this period upward of one hundred fever-nests have been broken up, the places thoroughly cleansed and disinfected, and many have been permanently closed. Meantime the search for hidden cases is rigorously prosecuted in lodging-houses, sailors' houses, and among the haunts of vagrants, and there is now every reason to conclude that, if this vigilance is continued, we may be spared the visitation which now oppresses London." And we *were* spared, although the disease manifested its contagious qualities as strongly as it did in London, spreading rapidly among the patients, nurses, and physicians at Bellevue Hospital, to which the first cases were carried. See what was done in the case of another epidemic. In May, 1869, notwithstanding the advice of physicians, promulgated in all parts of the city among the poor, to revaccinate, and the gratuitous distribution of lymph for the purpose, "the disease (small-pox) was found lurking in a hundred different localities in the city." Then the Board "undertook general vaccination by systematic house-to-house visitation. This was accomplished by eighty physicians. Nearly one hundred and seven thousand persons and thirty thousand houses were visited, making the needful inspection of almost half a million of the population, and actually vaccinating more than thirty thousand." "In consequence of this thorough work," the Board goes on to say, "the small-pox, which threatened to overspread the city, was at once arrested." Contrast this result with what occurred in

Paris at the very same time. In one week, in July, there were two hundred and sixty-seven deaths from small-pox, and more than seven thousand cases occurred between January and May, while in January, February, and March, there were eight hundred and ninety-six deaths from it. There is ample reason to believe that this was all due to the "*unsettlement of public confidence in vaccination.*"¹ The picture presented by the city of Barcelona, in Spain, less than a year ago, when the yellow fever was, by a careless quarantine, allowed to effect an entrance there, shows that we are no more exempt now from the consequences of a disregard of sanitary science than in the Middle Ages; that the same wholesale destruction of life, the same panic and disregard of social relations, the same prostration of commercial prosperity, are its inevitable result. And I would ask of my non-professional friends here, and the public generally, are you aware how this great engine of municipal reform was created? Was it through the votes of those poor wretches whose lives have been made tolerable, if not pleasant, by its beneficent operation? Was the enactment of the law creating it effected by the combined efforts of those landlords whose property, as the reports of the Board have clearly demonstrated, has been largely appreciated by it? Did the intelligent, the educated, the patriotic of our citizens, seize upon the bill as soon as it was offered, and insist upon its passage as an act of necessity, of charity, of justice, as an act

¹Just now small-pox is again spreading over the city, as over other portions of the civilized world, and why? Because the same efficient system of revaccination, as well as vaccination, is not practised. The homoeopathic fraternity have a good deal to answer for in this matter, since they have generally advised strongly against vaccination, with no better reason than they can give for any other part of their creed. Instead of this simple means of preventing the spread of the disease, we see respectable people, with mild attacks of varioloid, dragged out of their comfortable homes and beds, in rain or snow, and carried—where? By land and water, to an overerowed hospital on Blackwell's Island, in a condition not fit, at this time, for the reception of the meanest beggar. I can conceive of no greater outrage on private rights than this. Since this was written, more extensive accommodation has been provided by the Commissioners, and the condition of the hospital has been much improved. But small-pox patients of the better class should have accommodation on this Island, and, if necessary, be charged for it.

which had already been too long delayed to the detriment of all classes of our population? No! Strange as it may seem, it was left for that class whose *pecuniary* interests were to be directly injured by the provisions of the bill, to fight it through the Legislature inch by inch, and year by year, against the combined influence of all other classes; to employ their time and their money, too, to overcome the factious and short-sighted opponents of the bill. It is to be hoped that, at some future day, the public will be forced, by the repeated examples presented to them of the unselfish devotion of medical men to their interests, to the conviction that, when they ask for restrictive laws regulating the practice of medicine and pharmacy, these are merely to separate the man of science, working for the public good, from the dirty charlatan, pandering to the fears, the vices, the crimes of our youth of both sexes; laws which would not merely redound to the benefit of one class, as has heretofore been uncharitably contended by our legislators, but to the good of all classes, who have not otherwise the means of judging between the false glitter of tinsel and the brightness of the true gold.

The ultimate results of the most destructive wars have often been of the utmost service to the material progress of nations, and the actual advance of civilization. Thought, education, development, science, must assert a superiority over barbarism, wrapped in its mantle of complacent egotism, and maintain it, not by argument, which would be useless, but by brute force, which, as recent notable transatlantic examples have taught us, is as much a characteristic of our boasted civilization of to-day as it was a thousand years ago. Our own civil war, from the shock of which we are slowly but surely recovering, was but a necessary episode of our history, as it has been of all other nations before us, though we may be as yet slow to acknowledge the benefit which has resulted and *will* result, especially those of us who failed to gain the immediate reward from the shock of arms that was expected. To such it seems a sorry return for the disruption of family ties, contempt and hatred substituted for love and friendship, bereavements innumerable; widows and orphans, in their sable garb, spreading sadness over the land; poverty

and destitution invading the hearths of the educated, the refined, and the opulent; vice and immorality engendered; an inaptitude for steady, honest labor; a tendency to the highest crimes induced by long familiarity with carnage, destruction, suffering, and death. But every page of history tells us that the means to the end must always be accompanied by just such terrible evils. It is just here that medical science asserts and proves her superiority over all others. From the very *evils* of war, the disease, the mutilation, the loss of life, which would, otherwise, stand to a degree as an unmitigated offset to the benefits obtained, we, as physicians, deduce practical lessons of the highest value to our fellow-men. We thus impart, to the suffering and death of the patriots who flocked to their country's standard in her hour of need, a twofold value: rendering their sacrifice doubly honorable—a vindication of right and justice, and means for the melioration of the sufferings, and the salvation of the lives of future heroes, their children, or perhaps their children's children. It is difficult, nay, impossible, within my present limits, to give you an idea of the mass of valuable information accumulated by our military surgeons, North and South, during the war, and by the civil surgeons, who, “scenting the battle afar,” abandoning home and comfort, a lucrative practice, and without pecuniary reward, rushed to the blood-stained fields to render their valuable aid. But, through the skill and energy of our late surgeon-general, a grand National Museum, medical and surgical, was inaugurated at Washington, and most ably fostered by his successor, and his accomplished assistants, which is the wonder and admiration of all the distinguished surgeons of this and other countries who have had the good fortune to see it. Dr. Valcourt, of Paris, in his report to the Minister of Public Instruction on the “Medical Institutions of the United States,” characterizes this collection as, “beyond doubt, the most curious, the most instructive, and the most complete in the world.” It contains thirteen thousand five hundred and two specimens, and its descriptive catalogue alone forms an enormous quarto volume replete with invaluable information. A fact which renders the collection more valuable than any in Europe, independent of its nearer approach to completeness, is, that the cases are

followed up and their histories studied after their discharge from the army. We thus become acquainted with the final results of operations or treatment—a point of the first importance in estimating their relative value; whereas, “in the reports of the surgery of European wars, and of campaigns in India, Abyssinia, and elsewhere, the history of the cases terminated when the men were invalided or discharged.”¹ And the same remark applies to the French armies in the Crimean and Italian campaigns. In illustration of the widely-extended benefit of this magnificent collection, Surgeon-General Barnes in his last report says: “It is noticeable that, in the standard, systematic work on surgery by Billroth and Von Pitha; in the last edition of the English ‘System of Surgery’ by Holmes; in Didiot’s ‘Service de Santé des Armées,’ and in nearly all works on military medicine and surgery printed in the last few years, the majority of the woodcuts are derived from specimens in the United States Army Medical Museum.” It is to be hoped that Congress will not fail to see the advantage, nay the necessity, of spreading this information before the world, by responding to the wishes of the surgeon-general, and the profession, by the publication of a full medical and surgical history of the war, cost what it may. Thus, you see, even from this imperfect sketch of the progress of the science and art of medicine, that we have been no laggards in the race of improvement; that, while continents have been traversed by railroads, and oceans, separated by continents, thus brought together, deep and tumultuous rivers spanned by bridges, adding to the sublimity and effectiveness of the scenery, by their majestic arches of solid masonry, or by their delicate curves thrown high in the air, by a triumph of modern engineering skill, festooning their precipitous banks, enhancing their beauty, as well as adding to the celerity and safety of transit; while we see the East-India voyage, proverbial, from the earliest history of maritime enterprise, for tediousness and danger, reduced, by the skill and indomitable energy of Lesseps, to the tameness and monotony of a canal; and a project which will not be long in fulfilment, to reduce the transit to nine days, by the enterprise of our railroad kings;

¹ Report of Surgeon-General Barnes.

while we see the bottom of the great deep traversed thousands of miles in all parts of the world by electric cables, enabling us to converse with England or India at will, and its surface furrowed by splendid steamers, landing on either side almost with the regularity of ferry-boats—compared even with these wonderful triumphs, medical science may proudly claim a position in the vanguard of the army of progress.

While justly claiming for ourselves, however, such a position, we are painfully conscious that there are causes, operating within the profession, which tend to retard our advance, and to lower us in the estimation of the educated classes. To some of these only will it be possible to allude on this occasion, and first we note *a want of interest in our local medical organizations*, formed for the purpose of mutual improvement, and fully capable of affording it, if properly supported. The success of these societies, county and municipal, seems to depend too much on the capacity and energy of their officers, while there is abundant reason that they should enlist as hearty support on the part of every member, both for the promotion of the direct interests of our science, and the no less important indirect influence induced by enhancing the moral and social *status* of the members, the production and maintenance of a certain *esprit du corps*, which is nearly impossible under other circumstances.

Another cause is a palpable *neglect of our periodical literature*, both in the failure to support the journals by our subscriptions and by our literary contributions. “Of one hundred and twenty medical journals that have made their appearance within the last fifty years,” says a medical editor, “fully one-half were discontinued within from six months to three years from the commencement of their publication. Of the remaining number, twenty did not continue beyond five years; and, of more than thirty now being published in this country, only thirteen have been in existence more than a single decade.” We hear frequent assertions that our journals, as a rule, are not worthy of support; are not creditable to the country, and the present state of our science. If this be so, why is it? Whose fault is it that they are not more worthy? Not that of the editors, though they are not beyond improve-

ment. They are, as a class, capable, industrious, and well-meaning. Unfortunately, they have small means to invest in a work which is to benefit the profession rather than themselves. They appeal to those having facilities which they have not, to aid them, and this aid is withheld. Without the interest and coöperation of a considerable number of competent contributors, no journal can succeed. With these, combined with a very reasonable amount of editorial talent and energy, any journal will succeed. I deny, however, that there is any medical journal in the country which is worth less than the price of the subscription and postage to any physician. If we glean but one item of important information, one practical hint, which we should have obtained nowhere else, from the seven or eight hundred pages afforded by the yearly volumes, our money and time are well spent. It is a matter for congratulation that there is a manifest improvement, of late years, in the character of our periodical literature, and the reputation of our journals.

There is one relation between physicians and their patients, of so much importance to both, that a reference to it should not be omitted on such an occasion as this—namely, that of *dollars and cents*. Every sensible person is aware of the fact that an article purchased at a low price is not always cheap; and it is eminently so in the case of the services of medical men. If the physician is poorly paid, and has a struggle for the bare means of living, he has but little money for the purchase of books, and as little time for reading them; in fact, not even time for *reflecting* on cases involving obscurity and doubt, which is of as much importance as reading. Besides, his mind and body are worn out with overwork, and irregularity of eating and sleeping, and his judgment, at times, thus impaired. This must react unfavorably on his patients, who are thus deprived of the advantage of a clear head, and a mind stored with a knowledge of the improvements and discoveries of the age. It is plain, therefore, that the public are directly interested in securing a liberal compensation for the physician's services. It is to country practitioners mainly, though not exclusively, that these remarks are applicable. For there, we generally find men who have spent but little time or

money on their education, whose expenses are light, who neither read nor think, who can thus afford to practise for small fees, and who control, to a greater or less extent, those of their better educated and more skilful competitors. Closely related to this subject, is the idea entertained by many patients, that a service which requires but little time, and perhaps not much thought, ought to be done for a correspondingly small fee, not appreciating the fact that the *ability* to do it well was acquired by a large expenditure of time and money, and perhaps years of unrequited labor in hospital service. An instance just occurs to me, which will illustrate this. A farmer, to whom a dollar generally appears as if seen through a lens of considerable power, applied to me with a very deep and painful abscess in the palm of the hand. There was nothing to be done to save the hand from serious injury, but to cut deeply down, almost to the bone, which was accordingly done, the operation requiring perhaps ten seconds. When the pain had subsided, he inquired the price, which was small compared with our city fees. It was easy to perceive, by the falling of his lower jaw, and the general elongation of his visage, that something had disagreed with him. I said, "You think the charge high?" "Well, I don't like to complain, but it does seem 'rather steep.'" I then took from a shelf a preparation of a hand, with its arteries, veins, nerves, tendons, etc., all running, in close proximity, through the very space into which the knife had just passed, and convinced him very soon of the responsibility which a surgeon must incur in making this apparently simple and rapid operation. He departed a "wiser if not a better man," and well satisfied, apparently, that he had gotten off so cheaply.

There is a greater or less community of *interest* between the liberal professions, and yet, from a *want of a proper understanding, of a proper association among them*, they have always held a sort of antagonistic relation, more or less damaging to each, but especially so to ours. I include, among these professions, the *press*, which, from the ability and education of its managers, and the influence it exerts among the educated classes, as well as others, has a right to be so considered. Some of our most important duties bring us, or should bring

us, into close relations with the *clergy*, a coöperation with whose labors, and joint occupation of a portion of whose field, would assist us in the prevention of disease and crime, especially the crime which is becoming so common among all classes of society, and which really threatens to depopulate, as well as to demoralize certain communities, especially as regards their native American element. Here, the joint labors of the two professions have already, to a degree, been enlisted in New England, and, it is hoped, with some success. A closer association between these professions may also lead certain individuals of the clergy, unfortunately too numerous, to a better appreciation of the great injury which they inflict on the community by their recommendations of useless and injurious *nostrums*, of the composition of which they know nothing, thus unwittingly leaguering themselves with the worst species of impostors, whose senseless and immoral placards, in colossal letters, not only meet us at every corner of the street, or every turn of the road, but have defaced our most magnificent scenery, on the great lines of travel, and at all points of especial interest or beauty, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It might also prevent what certain religious organizations have recently, with mistaken zeal, been endeavoring to do in Cincinnati, to thwart the praiseworthy efforts of the Board of Health toward the mitigation of a social evil, which the experience of the last half-century has shown to be an irremediable one in all communities, and that prohibitory legislation, which these clergymen are seeking for, is worse than useless, as it was in the case of spirit-drinking. Of the history of this evil, of such vital importance to the moral and physical condition of society, and of the investigations, the experiments, and the struggles of medical men in all countries, to overcome or palliate its evil consequences, the clergy have no right to be ignorant. It is more their province than ours, and now this ignorance, or deep-rooted prejudice, equally to be deprecated among so important a constituent of society, finds them arrayed against us, instead of standing with us, shoulder to shoulder.

Our relations with the press, though much improved of late, are evidently very different from what they should be, as is

evidenced by the readiness of its writers to seek occasions to parade conspicuously in their columns any of our differences of opinion, which must of necessity arise in all professions, or to put the worst construction upon all charges made against us, from the most irresponsible sources, or to launch at us the ever-ready shaft of ridicule. "If the relations between the profession and the press were cordial," says my predecessor, Dr. Hewit; "if there were a correct understanding between the learned doctors and the able editors, and if they both had passed together through the same system of preliminary education; if the ethics of medicine were understood, and their personal relations those of a good and established society, would it be possible for the press, with a few honorable exceptions, to seize every occasion to disparage the legitimate profession? Would it be so reserved in its award of praise, so liberal in its application of censure? But, still worse, would these able, accomplished, refined, elegant, and witty gentlemen sell their space for public announcements, in unmistakable terms, of offers to perpetrate crimes which strike at the root of society, which undermine public health, which corrupt social morals, which relegate our era to the foulest periods of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Græco-Roman decomposition; which degrade our manners and civilization below Herculaneum and Pompeii, and sink them to a level with Sodom?"

The benefits of sanitary science, however, have been so conspicuous of late, as to compel a recognition of our claims to some appreciative notice. But, however great our past services, whatever the amount of life saved the city, and trade retained by our timely admonitions and laborious precautions, let one unfortunate divergence of opinion occur among us, concerning some intricate problem of State medicine, or some error of judgment get publicity, and the ever-ready arrows of wit and sarcasm, for which we have been made the mark in all ages, are showered upon our devoted heads.

With our brethren of the *legal profession*, especially since the rapid development of State medicine, our relations have become so intimate, our paths so parallel, that the necessity for a more or less close community of thought and action has made itself apparent to both professions; and, already, a

“Medico-Legal Society” has been formed in this city, for the purpose of drawing us together in closer bonds of union, and to determine upon questions involving a knowledge of both law and medicine, which combined knowledge it is impossible for either to possess in a degree sufficient for practical employment. The “cramming” on a medical subject, which a lawyer undergoes, to prepare himself for a particular line of medical interrogation before a court, being just sufficient to enable him to appear very learned in medical matters to the jury, perhaps even to the judge himself, and also to confuse a medical witness, who has neglected to brush up for the occasion, and who fails to see that a want of precision in the question itself, caused by a want of precision in the knowledge of the counsel, has involved him in the difficulty of framing a proper answer, but is not sufficient to enable the lawyer to appreciate the true import of the various medical facts presented, or the bearing of the various medical theories which may be adduced as rebutting evidence by the opposing counsel. But, by a frequent participation in the discussion of questions coming before this Society, physicians may become, in a measure, trained as medical experts, and cease to cut the sorry figure which they too often do before the courts; and lawyers may in time acquire a more general and practical knowledge of physiological and pathological principles, and cease to have their judgment warped and their eyes blinded by the imperfect and undigested accumulation of facts, hastily drawn from various sources, to serve the exigencies of a particular case. But far more important objects than even these are the aim of such an association, to which time will now scarcely permit an allusion: The whole subject of *insanity*, in its relation to medical jurisprudence; the harmonizing of its various forms, especially of those new forms which have been invented or discovered within a few years, on some occasions, seemingly to meet the requirements of a desperate case, when no other cause for justification or palliation could be supplied by the ingenuity of counsel; the advocacy of which extraordinary forms of mental alienation, by medical men, has led the public to impugn the purity of their motives, and to suspect undue sympathy for the prisoner, or, worse, undue influence on the part of his counsel or

friends, and which threatens even entirely to thwart the ends of justice in criminal cases, especially when high social station and wealth are arrayed against the State. The future disposal also of such persons as have escaped punishment through such means has already been discussed, and is to be brought before the Legislature. *The care and the education, and final disposition of such foundlings and illegitimate children* as escape death in our foundling hospitals and similar institutions. Statistics show that, even when legislation provides for all possible care of such individuals, still the percentage of crime and legal punishment among them is decidedly greater than among the more favored classes. But the discussion of these important topics must be left for a more suitable occasion. I merely give a hint of the scope of medical science in this important direction.

Another means of improving the status of professional acquirement, and the success of medical practice, is *the greater utilization of our various hospitals and other eleemosynary institutions*. There is great room for improvement here. The object of the establishment of these institutions, as well as the duties of their officers, I take to be twofold: first, to give the inmates all requisite care and attention; secondly, to give the profession, and, through them, the public, the benefit of whatever experience, whatever valuable information, they may acquire in the performance of their official functions. Any incumbent who fails to perform this latter duty fails to meet the responsibility imposed on himself by accepting such a position. There is only one way of performing this duty, that is, by making his experience the common property of the profession, by the publication, from time to time, of such statistics and cases as he judges to be of sufficient value, or such views of pathology or treatment as may be suggested by them. Without these, the public, who support these establishments by enormous sums, levied in the way of taxes, and by charitable contributions, get not half the value of what they pay for. Now, how many of us, who hold these important positions, meet this reasonable demand? Very few indeed. There are some who hold not only one, but several of these appointments, who seldom or never vouchsafe an item

of information to the profession. In fact, in some instances, it is simply impossible for them to do justice to all the duties which they undertake. But, in a majority of cases, it is possible. It is obvious, then, that these appointments should be more distributed among the profession, and that more discrimination should be exercised in their distribution. On you, therefore, gentlemen, and I may say, too, ladies of the laity, to whom is intrusted in many instances the power of appointments in these institutions, rests the heavy responsibility. If you are guided by personal feeling or friendship entirely in your selection, or even by a knowledge of the fact that your choice is possessed of great ability, of great reputation, perhaps a large private practice, evidencing the confidence of the public, you fail to do your duty. Proper inquiry among the different members of the profession might satisfy you that, with all these desirable qualifications, he is unfitted. Very marked ability, extensive acquirements, and a successful private career, are not necessary, but public spirit, industry, energy, ambition to do something more than merely accumulate money, are.

Our worthy mayor, in a recent address at the opening of a fair in aid of the establishment of another great charity in this city, justly distinguished the latter as the "City of Charities." To the credit of the city be it said, and I wish that my words could go beyond these walls, to the ears of those individuals, and those editors living in distant localities, who are so fond of holding us up as the personification of all that is vicious and corrupt, that in no city, perhaps, in the world, are there so many institutions for the relief of all manner of human suffering and infirmity, such a variety of organizations, public and private, such a rapid multiplication of these organizations, and such a readiness to respond to the calls of charity, whether they come from our immediate neighborhood, from distant parts of our own country, or from the remotest regions of the earth, whether from the sick and wounded of the conquerors, or those of the vanquished. That wonderful organization, the Commissioners of Charities, have alone, in this city, daily to care for some eight thousand of the destitute, mostly sick or infirm. Now, let us look to it, ladies and

gentlemen, for there is no distinction of sex in this good work, and in this responsibility, that all this noble display of one of the prime Christian virtues, this grand effort to respond to the calls of humanity and Christianity, is not crippled and circumscribed by a failure, on *our* part, to comprehend the most important of its details, the proper selection of its true executive officers.

Let us pause, in this connection, to drop a tear over the recent decease of the first and the noblest of the charities of New York, my hospital *Alma Mater*. You all remember—what New-Yorker can forget?—the ivy-mantled pile, with its neatly-kept grounds, and avenue of majestic elms, which greeted and refreshed the eyes of those who approached Broadway from Pearl Street. It was there when you were born—ay, and when our national independence was born. From the year 1770, when “George III., by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, sent greeting to his loving subjects, Peter Middleton, Samuel Bard, and John Jones, *physicians*,” has this institution been the pride of the medical profession, and the well-loved refuge for the sick, and especially the wounded of the State. Until recently, it was the greatest school for practical surgery in the country, and I may truly say, in some departments, the best school in the world. It was here that our greatest physicians employed their skill, and established their reputation. It was here that some of the greatest surgical triumphs of the world were achieved. A long list of illustrious names adorn her medical and surgical register—Mott, Wright Post, Alexander Stevens, and a host of others, worthy successors; while, among her trustees and governors, are the names of many of the oldest and most distinguished families of the State, names that will always be recognized by one acquainted with our early history. And yet, *mirabile dictu!* the representatives of those names, the conservators of this renown, have surrendered, without a struggle, this grand old structure, almost the only land-mark of the olden time, in the midst of a continued career of usefulness, to the greed of Mammon, to the spade and pick-axe of modern Vandalism. For a complete history of this extraordinary proceeding, I would refer you to the ad-

dress of my friend Dr. George A. Peters, before the Alumni Association of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, soon, I hope, to be published.

Education, one of the most important questions—considered by many physicians the most important question—bearing on medical improvement, must, of necessity, be very briefly discussed. A considerable portion of the very able address of Dr. Hewit, before this Association, two years ago, was devoted to this subject, and very radical changes in our system were strenuously urged, as they have been by others, especially in England, where the requirements are already far higher than in this country. Undoubtedly, a higher grade of education, as a preliminary to admission to medical lectures, and a longer course of medical study, as a preliminary to graduation, and perhaps also a connection with some hospital or dispensary, as a necessary preliminary to private practice, are requirements much to be desired. But it seems to me that in a country like this, changes in our educational system, to be effected safely, must be effected slowly; *festina lente*, hasten cautiously, lest, in attempting too much, we may lose something of what we have already gained. Consider its prodigious growth—whole States in the West equalling, and even exceeding in size, European principalities and kingdoms, spread over, occupied, and civilized, within a few years, by our own Eastern populations, and by immigrants from the Eastern hemisphere. These populations must have their medical attendants. If they cannot have regularly-educated physicians, with their diplomas in their hands, their places will be occupied by charlatans, and their prescriptions by the *nostrums*, whose advertisements are seen at every cross-road and blacksmith's shop in the newest settlements. Well-educated physicians, from our large schools and cities, will not go into these places; and these schools, more or less remotely situated, are not accessible to the men who must act in their places; they have neither the time nor the means to go through with a *curriculum* of study in an expensive city, with the cost of travel to and fro. But they are anxious to learn what they can, and it seems preferable to have a moderately-educated physician, with a certain *morale*, and responsi-

bility involved in the possession of a *diploma*, than an irresponsible charlatan. The assertion, "Knowledge is power," has so long and so often been made, as to be generally accepted as a fact. But does knowledge, *per se*, confer power? May not an overplus of knowledge, on the contrary, impair power, by crowding out thought, originality, mental independence? The Duke of Wellington once remarked to one who was praising the splendid education of a certain officer, "Yes, he is educated beyond his capacity." Knowledge, in its proper application, *is* power. Now, suppose we concede that a *liberal education* shall be requisite to a medical matriculation, who is to decide what a liberal education means? Just now, even in this age of change, of revolution, nothing is in a greater state of chaos and revolution than the subject of education in general. While some are clamoring for a thorough instruction in the classics, many of the best classical scholars in England are for abolishing them altogether; while two eminent authorities in Great Britain and here, Prof. Huxley and Dr Barnard, say, and with good reasons too, that our whole previous system of education is wrong, that we have actually been commencing at the wrong end, and giving the studies of adults to children, and *vice versa*. It would be difficult to say where, in this country, a real, genuine liberal education, such as would best fit a man for the practical duties of life, morally, mentally, and physically, which should be the end and aim of all education, is to be had. It is equally difficult, according so Prof. Huxley's evidence,¹ to find such a place in England. So, until we can settle the question as to what a liberal education is, and where it is to be had, we had better not insist on our candidates wasting time and money, which few have to spare, in making the uncertain experiment. Nevertheless, that a very gradual but progressive improvement in our medical colleges, especially in our larger cities, to which others look for examples, is needed, cannot be denied. But it is only to be accomplished by the institutions themselves, acting, not individually and spasmodically, but collectively and uniformly.

Our relations with the *fair sex*, with respect to the medical

¹ "Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews," Thomas Henry Huxley, 1871.

department of woman's rights, I regard as having been practically settled, and need not detain us. Our principle is to submit every thing reasonable to the test of experiment, and this great movement of our female population must submit to that test. So far as we legitimately can, so far as the struggle is kept within the bounds of decency and common-sense, the profession will aid rather than obstruct the experiment. Our relations with the *colored element* of our population, now seeking education and admission into the professions, is, in the future, likely to give us more trouble. Having spent the half of my adult life within the area of slavery, and the other half within that of freedom, my convictions are strong on the merits of this question, and I regret that the limit of this discourse, already exceeded, prevents its discussion.

Our relations with the public being of so intimate and important a character, as we have endeavored to indicate, it seems eminently proper that we should interest ourselves more in public affairs, and, if necessary, to make our influence properly felt and appreciated, we should not disdain even to enter the political arena. We should oftener see medical men, and representative men, in our legislative halls than we do; it is absolutely necessary that there should be a few well-informed physicians in all public bodies, to whom is intrusted the regulation of the internal affairs of States, or municipalities, in order to keep them fully instructed with regard to the merits of the various questions bearing upon the respective interests of the profession and the public, which are constantly occurring. It is so in other countries, and there is no reason why we should form an exception. The good which has been effected, and the evil which has been averted, on several occasions, in our legislative assemblies by the few physicians who have found an entrance there, encourage us to make an effort to increase rather than diminish the number, and to favor rather than attach professional odium to such of our fraternity as evince a desire to make politics a study, and to get an occasional pull at the wires which regulate the governmental machinery, and which ought to be no longer controlled by all other professions and interests of the body-politic save by ours. If, as has recently been stated, there are seventy-five thousand

physicians in the country, and an increase of near two thousand a year, and each of these, as we know, has a more or less important influence among his circle of acquaintance, there is no reason why their power should not be felt in the political world, especially as this power has always been exerted, indeed, can only be exerted, as I have been striving to demonstrate, as well for the public as the professional welfare.

Perhaps the extra-professional portion of my audience, those not thoroughly acquainted with the secret history of a physician's life and work, may imagine that professional zeal and enthusiasm have led me to exaggerate the benefits which society and the State have derived from medical science and her votaries, and the claim thereby established on our part for their favor and support. Far from it. On the contrary, I ought here, and in conclusion, to apologize to the profession, after having called the attention of the public to the subject of our relations with them, for not presenting it in a more forcible manner, for omitting perhaps the most illustrative examples, which have, no doubt, during the progress of my discourse, presented themselves to the minds of some of my professional brethren. But I have alluded only to such instances as have suggested themselves while writing amid the cares and constant interruptions of business, without aiming to be exhaustive of the subject, which would probably have resulted rather in exhausting your patience, for which I return my grateful acknowledgments. Of this, however, be assured, that a physician while engaged in his work, whether it be by the bedside of the wealthy and the influential, or ministering at the pallet of the beggar, whether on the field of battle amid the roar of cannon and the whistling of bullets, in the darksome and noisome cellar and garret, where lurks the concentrated poison of typhus, whether in the ice-bound regions of the poles, or in the pestilential swamps and jungles of the tropics, wherever the calls of duty, the demands of humanity, enthusiasm for discovery, or the interests of science find the physician, he is, for the time, at least, wholly forgetful of self, totally oblivious of danger, of the hope of reward of all save the interest inseparably attached to his work, or the

responsibility resting upon him, and the single purpose to meet that responsibility.

And allow me to say to you, my professional brethren, in bidding you an affectionate farewell for another year, that whether we gain or fail to gain fame and money in this world, whether we reap the just reward of our public labors of our charities, of our devotion to the State, and of the individuals whose lives and health constitute our more immediate concern, whether we ever succeed in elevating the minds of these individuals to a just appreciation of our profession, or of ourselves as its members, let us remember that our labor is not lost; that the consciousness, at the last, of having made the effort, of a noble duty well performed, is itself a reward, one too which comes at a period of our lives when it can be best appreciated; when the acclamations of the public, or the commendations of friends, and even the more solid meed of wealth accumulated, have sunk into comparative insignificance; when, in the twilight of our existence here, the time draws near for us to render our account to the greatest of all Physicians, and we feel as if we had some hope that He, in His mercy for our many faults of omission and commission, may utter the final sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

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